

71  
66

# THE ASSISTANT LIBRARIAN

FORMERLY "THE LIBRARY ASSISTANT"

OFFICIAL JOURNAL OF THE A.A.L. CITY

LIBRARIAN

FEB 21 1956

LIBRARY SCIENCE  
LIBRARY

Seven Mrs. Mops	13
Your Letters	14
Instructions for Stock-Taking	18
Talking Points	20
Administrator or Bookman?	21
On the way up	24
Go Forth, My Little Book	28

VOLUME 49 • • 1956 • • NUMBER 2  
FEBRUARY

**CEDRIC CHIVERS LTD.**

---

**PORTWAY, BATH**

---

**BOOKBINDERS**  
**—AND—**  
**BOOKSELLERS**

**TELEGRAMS**  
**"DUROFLEX," BATH**

**TELEPHONE**  
**7355, BATH**





# THE ASSISTANT LIBRARIAN

Official Journal of the Association of Assistant Librarians

(Section of the Library Association)

Edited by W. G. Smith, Finsbury Public Libraries.

VOL. 49. NO 2

FEBRUARY, 1956

---

## SEVEN MRS. MOPS

Should librarians clean the library? Our predecessor irritated the librarian of Newark by printing a newspaper report of his council's debate on the question of what rates of overtime should be paid to a library assistant cleaning the building during the caretaker's holiday. Mr. G. R. Ball, Senior Assistant at Newark, now writes "on behalf of the seven assistants concerned":—

"The contrast implied by your association of the two extracts from the *Newark Advertiser* of 5th October, quoted in the December issue of *The Assistant Librarian*, at present eludes us. Perhaps, however, a fuller presentation of the facts will help to clarify, for others, the matter dealt with in the smaller of the two articles.

No one assistant was responsible for keeping the Library clean during the caretaker's annual holiday. It was a task, voluntarily executed by the seven assistants available, requiring a little extra time from each of us in the mornings. An acknowledgement of £3 has previously been equally shared amongst the assistants concerned. When overtime rates are paid, a rule for the future imposed by the District Auditor, the oldest assistant will receive three times as much as the youngest, simply for sweeping a lino floor or dusting a few tables."

The only apparent alternative is to hand over the keys of the Library to a stranger for a period of two weeks, and trust that all fares well, or to have one assistant supervising the stranger at an early and unnecessarily inconvenient hour.

The spirit of staff-work here, as it must be with small staffs elsewhere, is such that many things are done in the name of public service which do not come within the scope of the L.A. Examinations. We sincerely believe that this attitude does no harm either to ourselves or, if this attitude be publicized, to any proposals the Association may have for the betterment of conditions of service within the profession.

Mr. Ball refers to our *profession*, but we wonder what other professional people would tolerate being turned into Mrs. Mops. When cleaners are absent in other departments, do solicitors, engineers, architects, accountants and doctors immediately seize mop and pail? ("Don't look now, but the Clerk of Works' pianofore is slipping.") What exactly is the great harm that a "stranger" caretaker could do at Newark? Would the heavens fall if he swept the wrong floor or dusted the wrong table?

An excess of restrictive practices is bad, but most professions and trades have found it necessary to impose some. There is nothing undignified in sweeping a floor, but a clear distinction is normally drawn between that type of work and that performed by professional and clerical workers. For librarians to accept such duties is bound to make more distant the day when librarianship will be universally recognised as an important profession; bound to bring upon us the contempt of the established professions.

## Your Letters

- Kingsley Amis - The Newark Incident - Display  
- Subscriptions - Interavailability - Salaries

### THAT UNCERTAIN FEELING

In our December issue, Alan Glencross critically reviewed the new Kingsley Amis novel. Now we have:—

#### AN OPEN LETTER TO MR. GLENCROSS

Perhaps you write for your own amazement, perhaps to kill time; your pardon then, sire, if I move the slovenly corpse you left behind you.

How anyone, least of all the co-author of the *Fiction Index* (and here my "commercial" ends), could read *That Uncertain Feeling* and not recognise it as the greatest work of fiction since *Brown's Manual* is incredible.

The Atonio-ing across hummocky lino, the flannel, the guff, the patter, the chambers of horrors busily going about the task of disseminating education, recreation, information and fostering local culture through the media of books. Ughhhh! the cliches.

If you don't know or believe that this goes on, Mr. G., then there is a little justification for your review.

The only insincere note struck in the book, whistles for your part in the market place. The contrived happy ending positively thuds on the counter; Lewis getting out of the game altogether may be his salvation—but it is hardly likely. His natural progression was on to bitter disillusionment and the terrifying ability to depress and infect all who come near. But that alas is the tragic truth and doubtless outside Mr. Amis' scope.

Beware, however, Mr. G. for if you don't acquire a better knowledge of 638.1 and 598.2, and your feet stay firmly planted in the clouds, who knows? Mr. Amis may come along and pin you firmly into his volumes of exhibits.

D. GUNTON,  
Stoke Newington Library.

Mr. Glencross describes Kingsley Amis' latest novel as "emetic." In other words, it makes him vomit. Surely he cannot be serious. Perhaps the article was a joke; but, if so, I suspect that many will have missed the point.

"It is a pity," says Mr. Glencross, "[that the contempt of Mr. Amis for the library profession] is not based on a greater familiarity with the subject." In his first novel, *Lucky Jim*, Mr. Amis doled out similar treatment to his own profession, with which, presumably, he is familiar. It is said, after all, that familiarity breeds contempt, and the average novel-reader is rarely concerned with the intricacies of the hero's profession.

It is easy to take Mr. Glencross seriously and quibble with the minor issues raised in his article, but in doing so one loses all sense of proportion. One wonders if the Caterers' Association protested about their treatment in *Brighton Rock*, or the Private Detectives' Union against misrepresentations in countless novels. A novel is not intended to be dissected like a laboratory specimen, so it is pointless being peevish if dissection reveals dry-rot.

The library profession is criticised for many weaknesses. At least let us show that we can take a joke against ourselves.

ANTHONY L. WILLS,  
Branch Librarian, Warsop.  
Nottinghamshire County Library.

As I read the article by Alan Glencross (December *Assistant*) on *That Uncertain Feeling*. I kept wondering whether this were not, after all, how readers view libraries and librarians, and when I had finished it, the possibility was horribly real. If I think back to when I was a public library

reader, I can remember, dimly, a quite different library, though: with the same features. Then it was a place to be visited once or twice a week; now it is a place of work which I see every day: every inch of it is very familiar. It is familiarity of course which breeds contempt—but then it is Kingsley Amis who is showing the contempt, so perhaps that lets libraries and librarians out?

To reassure myself, I read the book and that started up another uncomfortable feeling: had Mr. Amis read the McColvin report? Mr. Glencross writes that the library "seems to be dismal, dirty, badly stocked, ill-equipped, understaffed and inefficiently administered." Compare with this, Mr. Colvin: "A great majority of library buildings are unsuitable, inappropriate, inadequate . . . ugly, uncomfortable, cold, badly lit, dreary . . . . In too many libraries the fiction shelves are a drab and unattractive array of shabby books . . . . Most libraries employ far too few people . . . ."

Ah, but that was 1942. After all, this is 1956. Surely it is too unkind of Mr. Amis to show contempt for libraries in 1956. It's enough to make you sick.

A. P. SHEARMAN,  
*Senior Assistant, Slough.*

### SMALL LIBRARIES

Extract from *Newark Herald* dated 15th October, 1955:—

"Mr. R. P. Blatherwick, J.P., has called attention to the paragraph in last Saturday's issue in which it was stated that the recommendation of the Library Association's Council was rejected at the Association's annual meeting due in large measure to the intervention of Mr. R. P. Blatherwick.

This Mr. Blatherwick regards as an overstatement as he was only one of a number who spoke strongly against the memorandum to the Council. The main credit lies with the Librarian at Whitehaven who prior to the meetings at Southport had contacted all the authorities affected and had organised

opposition."

The above surely indicates that the Chairman of the Library Committee at Newark-on-Trent was rather sensitive about the report made in local papers. I cannot imagine that any Librarian is entirely happy about reports made from impromptu speeches. I assure you that The Gilstrap Public Library Committee will never be advised nor would the members recommend withdrawal from the Library Association. The subject has never even been considered. It would be something of a relief to know why the Newark press report on this matter was chosen for publication in your December issue. There were many others in which much more unfortunate phraseology was used.

I know, and many other professional librarians know also, that this library is—in many ways—more fortunate than some in towns of much larger rateable value. There are no loan charges and there are endowments for the reference library, junior library and fabric of the building. The building was provided by Sir William Gilstrap by deed of gift dated 1881, and since then it has received financial gifts for special purposes, as well as for annual income purposes, from members of the Gilstrap family. I can understand, perfectly, why Newark wishes to retain its library, and I shall do everything possible to help.

On the matter of cleaning the Library during the caretaker's holidays, I'll let the assistants speak for themselves. (See page 13, Ed.).

ARTHUR SMITH,  
*Librarian, Newark-on-Trent.*

That there would be opposition to the L.A. proposals on the size of Library Authorities was only to be expected. That it would take the form of pleas of misrepresentation or of non-publication of the opposition's views is also not surprising. The parties of reaction always consider they have been dealt with in an unfair manner and fail to recognise the intelligence of the individuals to whose decision they have

had to submit themselves. Is it really necessary for a library assistant to have all the possible consequences of his vote explained in words of one syllable? Any assistant in library work will naturally have formed his own opinion of the question over a period of time.

The opposiiton fails to see further than the excellences of their smaller systems and the so-called shortcomings of their larger neighbours. These proposals should be viewed as a whole with regard to the benefit of the public at large. To pick holes in another system shows a poor mentality, and it will only be when minds rise above this petty criticism and attempt to serve the community as a whole that the approach to adequate library services

will be in sight. The difference in coverage at the present time is obvious, but there is no merit in exposing a particular shortcoming without considering all the facts associated with it. Indeed, this indulgence in criticism should rather be directed at one's own system and not made to distract attention from it.

Our energies should be combined to make a general improvement in the library services of this country, so that the book which one librarian proudly claims to have added to his reference stock is available for loan in sufficient numbers in the country as a whole.

N. BURGESS,  
*Senior Assistant, Droylsden,  
Lancashire County Library.*

### STICK IT ON THE WALL

Mr. Howes wants to cross swords with me, he says, because I disapprove of book jackets being used in displays. Have at you then, Mr. Howes.

When a publisher goes to the trouble of wrapping his book up in a jacket designed to attract attention, it seems to me an offence against charity and common sense to strip it off again. Why not display the whole job? Because someone might take it out perhaps? That's what displays are for. Because not enough real books on the subject are in? Then the subject doesn't need displaying. Eviscerated book jackets create a demand which can't be satisfied at once, and are therefore a bad thing.

But, says Mr. Howes, lunging at me vitals, doesn't a list of books in a library bulletin do the same thing? No, it doesn't, simply because a bulletin lists a great many titles. Hard times they must be if none of the books in Mr. Howes' recent additions list are around when they are asked for. For the same reason, a bulletin will more successfully demonstrate "the diversity of books" than a washing-line of book jackets, unless Mr. Howes papers the walls with the things.

Book jackets left where they belong sell books from a display, and go on selling them from the shelves. I see no point in interfering.

JOHN WAKEMAN,  
*Dagenham Public Libraries.*

### PAY UP

Those of us who read the *Library Association Record* will have noticed that L.A. members whose subscriptions for 1955 remain unpaid are liable to expulsion from the Association.

We belong to organisations that serve a community, and as members of that community have obligations towards it. We have obligations no less to our own association, obligations which some of us apparently do not meet. We in fact treat our defaulting members comparatively lightly, since

at least one professional association removes from membership those whose subscriptions are *three months* or more in arrears.

Things are not easy for any of us these days, but, as members of an aspiring professional body, we should surely all of us set as good an example in our domestic affairs as we try to do in our professional work.

MICHAEL T. SLEIGHTHOLM,  
*Senior Assistant, Leeds.*



## WARNING TO FEMALES

It is a good thing in all matters to have one's facts correct. It is vitally essential that they should be so in any matters relating to salaries and status, for an incorrect fact is a very large chunk in one's armour.

I am sorry, therefore, to read in his otherwise useful article in the January number of *The Assistant* that Mr. J. R. Dean has gravely misquoted paragraph 21 (XXI) (a) of the National Joint Council Scheme and Conditions of Service which relates to the grading of professional library staffs. This states "A Chartered Librarian in charge of a branch or district library, and supervising a staff of three other whole-time officers or the equivalent—APT II." It does not say, as Mr. Dean quotes it as saying, "of three or more . . ." This should be held to mean precisely what it says, and I would refer Mr. Dean and others to the interpretation given by the Joint Secretaries of the National Council and quoted in the Editorial of the Library Association Record, February, 1951, page 37.

Three other matters occur to me about this salary business, and these are all things which library staffs themselves may do to improve the position, whatever Library Authorities or Chief Librarians do or do not do. (1) Make full use of the appeal machinery to achieve a just reward, so often one hears of staffs who will not bother because they feel it would be useless. With this goes, of course, the necessity of working in close touch with the local branch of NALGO, and all public librarians who are not active members do themselves and their profession a grave disservice. (2) Do not apply for positions which are inadequately graded. Whether the position is black-listed or not, one should use one's conscience as well as one's knowledge to indicate whether a post is being underpaid. Enough has been written about the non-professional conduct of persons who apply for such positions for there to be any need for me to add fuel to the fire, but I will stick my neck out a little by suggesting to my single female colleagues that they should be particularly wary of accepting a post which is not being paid at a salary adequate for a married man with family responsibilities. (3) Need I mention that staff should show themselves to be worthy of a high salary and status by their professional qualifications, and the attitude they display to the public they serve. Sometimes one has the feeling that some librarians are overpaid.

O. S. TOMLINSON,

*Deputy Librarian, Finchley.*

## CALL TO ACTION

Mr. Bernard Stradling's article in your last issue, *Readers on Holiday*, raises once again the need for a national scheme of interavailability of readers' tickets. While this is becoming an essential requirement with the development of subject specialisation and co-operative book purchase schemes, the immediate need is for more co-operation from the Library Association and librarians generally to make present arrangements more widely known.

Some years ago the L.A. issued a list of interavailability facilities offered by all the local authorities in the British Isles. There is an urgent need for an up-to-date and fuller version printed in handy form and for librarians everywhere to publicise this information. I can assure them the service is appreciated and we in the holiday centres make many new friends each year as a result.

JOHN R. PIKE,

*Deputy Librarian, Torquay.*

DOROTHY TUNKS—*Hove Library.*

## INSTRUCTIONS FOR STOCKTAKING

### NECESSARY EQUIPMENT.

One Chief Librarian with overall to fit. Quantity of hot water, soap and towels. Anti-dust breathing apparatus. Dusters. Stock records. One assistant complete with protective clothing. Odd boys, janitors, for carrying, replacing fallen shelves, restoring staff to consciousness, etc.

### PRELIMINARY EXERCISES.

It is essential that assistant (and an asset if the Chief Librarian) is physically capable of bodily contortions in order to facilitate the checking of books on high shelves, low shelves, easily-tipped-up-shelves and those volumes which are double stacked, triple stacked or just shelved-behind-those - bound - volumes - of *The Times*-because-they-are-never-looked-at. Staff responsible for handling the books (it is a great asset if the Chief Librarian copes with this bit) should be able to read fluently Arabic, Hottentot, all Chinese variants, Hindustani, the umpteen Indian dialects, in addition to all European tongues and must, moreover, be able to make these intelligible to the poor mut who has the stock records which will either be in cataloguer's English or not exist at all—probably a good thing.

Staff engaged on stock-taking manoeuvres should realise that the alphabetical and chronological order on which they have been carefully reared is not necessarily the only practical arrangement and that their predecessors will have had *their* own ideas. This does not justify any expression of disapproval. One must maintain a respect for those whose initiative, constant devotion to duty, enthusiasm and plain stupidity have made libraries what they are to-day.

### PROCEDURE.

It is assumed that the staff for the job are now clad in overalls and their right minds (this latter will prove of temporary duration). If any members of their immediate family or any close associates are of an anxious temperament it is now that a warning should be given to disregard any undue peculiarities that may manifest themselves in their nearest and dearest during the coming months. Such symptoms may vary from a tendency to sinister mutterings under the breath to the sudden lapse into unconsciousness on sight of any book more than five years old.

To resume—assemble your staff and stock records and adjourn to the first section to be checked. The Chief Librarian should handle the books personally as only his experience and professional knowledge can determine the suitability of a book for a permanent place in the library stock (such procedure will also finally disillusion him of any ideas he may still retain of the high intellectual status of his and his predecessors' calling). However, the Chief Librarian is warned of the inadvisability of asking any department head if the book he is thinking of discarding is of use. If you want to get rid of the thing—get rid of it. Ask an opinion and you will surely find that the ancient tome, thick with dust, pages uncut and roots growing nicely into the shelf below is of *vital necessity* to the well-being of the department, staff, indeed of the whole thinking British public. Be firm, be positively brutal. This is no time for courtesy and encouraging lesser bodies to speak their minds. You'll never get rid of anything that way.

### BE PREPARED TO FIND THAT—

Books of real value and interest will be flourishing hotels for moth and worm, while the odd volume of Sir Whosit's memoirs of the Fuzzy-

wuzzy campaign (title page badly torn, pages 2—99 missing) has been elaborately bound. This is *putting-first-things-first*. Sir Whosit was Chairman of the Library Committee from 1894 until his death at the ripe old age of 102 in 1940. Nobody knows the monk who illuminated that fourteenth century manuscript.

The courtesy you have been advised to discard was definitely a thing of the past. It was the height of bad manners to refuse a gift. This maxim has obviously (only too obviously!) been strictly adhered to. Part 3 of volume 6 of a Mexican translation into Arabic of the Chinese text of Aristotle will be one of your lesser problems. The typewriter will not reproduce the script of the other gems, so kindly donated by

\*\*\*\*\*

From time to time, presumably as subsequent editions of Dewey have been produced, attempts at re-classification have been made. Be prepared, therefore, to find a slight variation between class numbers quoted on catalogue entries, title page, and spine of the volume. You cannot, you *must not* expect them to conform. You have the book—be content. Remember, too, that you can never have too much of a good thing. (Taste in good things can change with the passage of time). Your idea of bibliographical bliss may not be five copies of Carlyle's *French Revolution* in varying states of decay, but somebody's loving hand inscribed "from the Tom-tomm Bequest" on the elaborately scrolled donation label on the back cover of each. Think on these things before you cast the lot aside. Obviously in the past the question of a possible stock-taking has been raised. Zealous staff have done what they can to facilitate matters for you. Neat little notes, on catalogue entries, or coyly peeping from the inside covers of books, will remind you that "there are seven more copies of this book in the roof" or "keep this volume until stock is taken, it is neither added to figures nor catalogued. Shelves in June, 1908."

You have found a collection of all the novels of Mr. Dickens, Charlotte Bronte and Mrs. Henry Wood and seven copies of *Eric or Little by Little* bound in three volumes. They are all badly foxed and pocket editions, but it's nice, isn't it? It sort of comforts one after finding that most of the law books are twenty years behind the times and aeronautics haven't progressed beyond balloons.

The cream of any reference library, however, is the local collection. *Local* may be defined by a dictionary as "confined to a spot," but there are some very large spots about. Be prepared for a complete collection of the privately printed (at great expense to the authoress) poetry of Amelia Fitz-McIntyre, who spent a whole week in the town at the age of nine-and-a-half months. The complete edition was purchased from a special bequest fund. The four additional copies were kindly donated by the author. Every sermon preached in every church for the past fifty years, a widely representative selection of the work of local presses (including publicity for a Grand Autumn Sale at Alderman Blank's vast emporium), verse about the fifth tree on the left going down the main street, every edition of every guide to every museum in the county—did you say you did not quite realise the immensity of the task you had undertaken? Feel perhaps it would be better left to someone who is more settled and likely to live to complete the job? Well, just look at this before you go, then we shall have finished one shelf. It's a folio sized scrap-book of pictures of Robin Hood, all coloured by hand by the Town Clerk's grandfather at the age of nine. The last Town Clerk but five, I mean. This could be scrapped of course? No? Oh, I beg your pardon. Of course if Robin Hood was your first boyhood hero

## TALKING POINTS

**Mr. O'Leary**, the disputatious director of Dagenham, throws another hefty brick in his annual report 1954-5. He shows that a low rateable value does not necessarily mean a poor service and compares his own poor area with rich Wemb'ey, which has a similar population, but double the rateable value. Yet Wembley spent in 1952 thirty per cent. less on its libraries than Dagenham. The implication is that the service at Wembley, which is part of Middlesex County Libraries, is not good enough. Would anyone care to defend it?

**Puzzled Librarians.** Most reference librarians will have been asked for help in solving crossword and other puzzles. The *Daily Express* urged contestants a few years ago to seek solutions to its competition at public libraries, but many who did so were not welcomed by librarians. In America the problem is apparently much worse. The *Wilson Library Bulletin* for December, 1955, tells of one contest which caused libraries all over the country to limit each person's time at the dictionary to fifteen minutes. Nevertheless, it is said that 5,000 copies of Webster's unabridged were worn out. Chicago reported that 15,000 persons came to the library in search of the answer to a single question. Another in Los Angeles had to call the police when the contestants began to resemble a small army. Some libraries post the answers on special bulletin boards, but the author of the article questions the ethics of this and suggests instead setting up special departments for contestants with additional sets of reference tools.

Most of these contests are organised for advertisement purposes. With the introduction of commercial television and other recent increases in the use of American sales techniques, the problem may become acute in this country. What will be the attitude of British librarians?

**Peterborough Library** has itself set a competition for its readers. To celebrate the fiftieth anniversary of the library's opening, members are asked to write a review as if for the *Daily Telegraph* of a novel recently borrowed from the public library. First prize is a £5 book token.

**On Reading Books and Bookmen.** Mr. Purvis, of Newbury library:—

An awful thought occurs to me—  
How few can see the B.N.B.  
Else why should This Year's Mystery  
Concern Miss Read's identity?

**Arthur Jones.** We were pleased to hear that our predecessor as editor attained such a high place in the election for national councillors. Under his guidance this journal was consistently praised and his retirement from the editorship was to the regret of the whole A.A.L. Council. Editing, however, he regarded as a pleasant sideline to his many other activities for the Association. His vigorous direction of the publications programme rescued our finances from an embarrassing position and ensured a series of textbooks of great value to students. His contributions to Council debates have always been sensible and forceful, and we are glad to know that he will be able to continue this in his new role of National Councillor.

**Congratulations to Sussex Division** for an excellent newsletter under the editorship of J. H. Jones of West Sussex Libraries. The first task of a divisional newsletter is to ensure that we have a well-informed membership. Sussex members are told how their representatives voted on important matters arising at A.A.L. Council and the local Branch Committee. NOTE TO OTHER MEMBERS: Do you know how your representatives voted on the questions of a municipal libraries section, b'acklisting, a public relations officer for the L.A. or any other matter mentioned in Council Notes in the past year? If not, write and ask your Divisional Secretary. If you do not know his address we will be glad to forward your letters.

**Publications.** The third edition of Hewitt's *Summary of Public Library Law* was published last year just before changes occurred in the library laws for Scotland. A leaflet bringing the book up to date in respect of Scottish law is now available. To obtain it, send a 1½d. stamped addressed envelope to J. S. Davey, 49, Halstead Gardens, London, N.21.

A useful publication for bibliography students is Gilbert Turner's *The Private Press: its Achievement and Influence*, 1954, published by the Midland Division. Copies, price 2s., may be obtained from the Hon. Secretary, Reference Library, Birmingham, 1.

The Greater London Division announces that its *Union List of Bibliographies* and *Union List of Reference Books* are now out of print. A new edition of the two works in one volume will be published later this year.

J. Walton, of Essex County Libraries, kind'y draws our attention to two articles on Bible printing of interest to students of historical bibliography. They are by John M. Sinclair and appear in two successive issues of *British Weekly* dated 24th November and 1st December, 1955.

## ADMINISTRATOR OR BOOKMAN?

By P. G. NEW, B.A., A.L.A., *Coulsdon and Purley P.L.*

THERE HAVE OF LATE been signs that the library profession is concerning itself more with books and less with library techniques and gadgets. Before applauding this as a wholly good tendency, it may be well to consider how far the librarian's duties and training should make him an administrator, and how far a bookman.

Perhaps one of the reasons behind this recent emphasis on bookmanship is the urge librarians have to be regarded as professionals; for it is thought that administration itself is less professional than some special skill such as is shown by doctors, lawyers and teachers. Against this it can be argued that senior administrators in the Civil Service for example, are regarded as professional people even though they may have no specialised skills.

Mr. Pockington (1) writing on this subject in the *Assistant* two years ago regretted the fact that the Chief Librarian in a public library was in fact no librarian at all, but merely a man busy with committees and administration. I feel that the Chief is rather a special case, and that although his duties must be primarily administrative, he is nonetheless a librarian. It is obvious that reports to the governing committee, and supervision of all the work of the library must come from the chief officer; he must therefore be a capable administrator even if he has no other qualities. I shall show later that a concern with the bookstock is the prime *raison d'être* of the senior library staff, but this need not be

at the highest level. It is possible to delegate bookmanship, but impossible to delegate administrative responsibility.

Having said this, I must make the obvious point that the distinguishing feature of our profession is our knowledge of books, and it is by this that we are judged. No amount of technical efficiency in book issuing methods for example, can make up for lack of book knowledge. What is needed is that far more staff time should be spent dealing with the bookstocks, selecting, withdrawing, revising, checking. Every librarian should combine in working at the stock from every angle. Good practice would be found in producing an abundance of short annotated booklists based on books personally examined. Current book selection should be shared, but a means found of selecting the obvious books without recourse to a ponderous committee. All this is possible, of course, in the conventional library system, but we should note the experiments at Tottenham in staff subject specialisation. Here the staff, whose duties are divided by the natural characteristic of the subject matter of the bookstock, can achieve real familiarity with the stock, and use techniques directly as aids to books rather than as ends in themselves. Perhaps within a decade or two, staff specialisation will be as commonplace as open access. At all events, we should try to avoid the situation which obtains in so many libraries to-day, where certain members of staff (often Deputies and Chief Assistants) are almost entirely employed on clerical or minor administrative duties, which could either be shared out or entrusted to a specially appointed Administrative Assistant who would not be a librarian.

So far, I have been rather extreme in an attempt at clarity. It should not be thought that your Chief should be a supreme administrator and nothing else and that subordinate staff will be quite satisfactory if they are bibliophiles only. Everyone in libraries needs a sense of method, and administrative ability is required in the head of any extensive department. Just as a certain standard of organising talent is required in the subordinate staff, so the Chief requires at least a modicum of book knowledge. This need not be a deep or a close knowledge, but the Chief may find that many of the committee's decisions on the broad issues of library planning—staff, bookfund, siting of branches, etc.—are influenced by his knowledge of his books and readers and the work undertaken by his staff.

Of course, the perfect librarian will be both administrator and bookman, but flesh and blood approximations to the ideal have more of one quality and less of the other. We need both types in our libraries, and it is fortunate that the two qualities are not mutually exclusive.

Some previous writers on this topic have, in their efforts to revive interest in books, stressed too much the books of "literature" in the sense of Dewey's class 800. Mr. Pocklington (1) for example:—

"Why not invite leading members of the profession to write a few words [in the *L.A. Record*] on the subject of their three favourite books, telling us briefly what they are about and what makes them attractive to the writer?"

This could be taken to refer to any type of book, but the spirit of Mr. Pocklington's article makes the meaning more likely to be "literary" books. Again, Mr. Moon (2):—

"The equipment the average librarian, and his assistants, need to-day more than anything else is a sound knowledge of modern and contemporary literature, and particularly fiction."

I do not wish to denigrate literature; in fact, as the public library is one of the last bastions of the humanities in an increasingly technological

age, I would advocate provision of serious literary works more generously than would be indicated by their issue value.

This is no more than repeating the old axiom of book selection that books should be provided according to the value of the book and its subject, and in relation to the actual and potential demand. While we, by and large, carry this out for the humanities, science and technology receive scant treatment. This must be remedied if libraries are to be fully effective to all sections of the community. The best answer seems to be some form of subject specialisation among the staff, even though the stock may not be split up. It may be noted that a very useful knowledge of the literature of scientific subjects can be built up by practice in this field by those who have little previous scientific training.

The type of training given to librarians has tended to bias them unduly in favour of literature; for, as Mr. L. R. McColvin has said (3) the assistant's basic need is for extensive rather than intensive subject knowledge. He should have a good grasp of the "map of knowledge," so that he knows the relationship of subjects and their relative importance. An assistant may know very little about frequency modulation for example, but he should be aware that it is an important and topical radio development, and he should have some idea of the likely material obtainable on it. With staff subject specialisation, some assistants will know more than this, but unless the right number of people are induced to take special subject courses, and these courses are geared to the number of vacancies for subject librarians in the right subjects, we shall have to recruit our subject specialists from general librarians.

To summarise: We should accept administration as part of the duties of a librarian. Some knowledge of organisation is required in all, but it is of the greatest importance in a Chief. Far more senior staff time should be spent in dealing with the bookstock, and energies not confined to the humanities although they are important. To this end library students should be given an overall picture of the "map of knowledge" (necessarily superficial) as a prelude to possible subject specialisation later.

#### References.

- (1) P. D. POCKLINGTON. Book Knowledge and the Young Assistant, in *Assistant Librarian*, June-July, 1953, p. 88.
- (2) E. E. MOON. The Assistant and the Bookish Habit, in *L.A. Conference Papers*, 1954, p. 69.
- (3) L. R. MCCOLVIN. Some Thoughts on Staff Training, in *Library Review*, Summer 1954, p. 347.
- (4) G. R. DAVIES. "Literary" or "Admin."? in *Bookseller*, 20th February 1954, p. 744.

## CRAMERS for MUSIC

MUSICAL LITERATURE  
AND MUSIC BINDING

139, New Bond Street  
London, W.1

★ Special Music Enquiry Bureau

# 519

Public Libraries in Britain  
now subscribe to

## KEESING'S

Among the new-comers are  
many Branch Libraries—both  
Urban and County.



# ON THE WAY UP

H. A. WHATLEY

*Lecturer, School of Librarianship, Scottish College of Commerce*

AN ARTICLE BY MR. HEPWORTH (1) described applications and preparation for an interview. Another by a committee member (2) gave the point of view of a person on the other side of the table. The present writing attempts to fill the gap between the two by giving a picture of the atmosphere of interviews. This is based on a variety of experience, extending over twenty years, covering positions of cataloguer, chief assistant, deputy librarian, librarian in urban and county libraries, information officer, market research officer, newspaper librarian, library school lecturer, and posts abroad with the British Council and Unesco.

WAITING. You can expect the barest consideration for your comfort while waiting. You may feel suspicious of the interviewing body, thinking that they want to keep you at a distance from your rivals lest you make any whispered comparisons with other candidates. Your fears are probably groundless. It is far more likely that the interviewers have considered your comfort by arranging that each person is called at a specific time, say, at fifteen minute or half-hour intervals, in order that you are not kept waiting for two hours if your name happens to come towards the end of the alphabet.

Another time you find yourself chumming up with other applicants in the mayor's banqueting hall, or its foyer, surrounded by such vastnesses that you shrink from contact with the Big Authority. About one in ten of your waiting surroundings will be pleasant. What nicer than sharing the chief's room, its upholstered chairs and plush carpet, while he is in the committee room? Tea and biscuits may be served, too.

Except for the solitary confinement cases, you are usually too busy talking to the short list to pay very much attention to your surroundings. Now and again there may be only one other candidate and then conversation is curtailed, but most frequently you will have from three to seven companions. You learn names, positions held, facts about the job and the library service—the extra-keen will have discovered all they can about the place, or have come earlier in order to visit the library and have a talk with the deputy librarian. You will learn a lot about other recent vacancies, who was on the short lists and who was appointed. You will meet old acquaintances.

Gradually you sort out the speakers and begin to weigh up your chances. B sounds too boastful; C's tie is badly awry; D is a quiet chap and has a very pleasing manner of speech; E is far too talkative and sounds as though slang will be his downfall. F needs a haircut, while G never says a word about himself. Thus you pass the time in waiting. The order of going in for interview is most frequently alphabetically by surname, but once in a while you may get a pleasant (or unpleasant) surprise to find a different (? haphazard) order is used.

When each candidate returns from his interview—and somebody will have timed him—he is probed for hints on the great unknown—what was it like? How many of them are there? Any awkward questions? Some people are very ready to disclose their experiences, others only mumble and talk of other things. There can be little harm done or help given in discussing your own interview if you keep to generalities, but it is wiser not to mention actual questions asked.



INSIDE. The clerk brings a candidate back and you realise that this is it—you are next! You walk in behind the clerk who holds the door open for you. In a second you grasp the arrangement of the table and the committee, you see the vacant chair and at that moment things begin, the chairman invites you to take a seat. If you have been quick enough you may have had time to say "Good afternoon" with a slight bow, but it needs practice.

THE ATMOSPHERE. In the first half minute you have probably sensed the feeling of the company. Are they cold and hard, mainly business men? That may go with cold and hard chairs, an institutional atmosphere. Or is the committee warm and ma'ey? That feeling may go with carpets, pictures on the walls and curtains at the windows. Is the room slightly untidy, the table littered with papers, cigarettes, signs of tea or other drinks? I have been interviewed by a man in his shirt sleeves and scarlet braces—true, it was the editor of a paper!

THE INTERVIEW. You have sized them up, now it is their turn. The considerate chairman begins by introducing you to the company by quoting from the information in front of him, he briefly sketches who you are and something of your experience. This is very valuable breathing time. You regain your breath if you lost it; you relax, but not slump, in your seat; you make yourself feel at ease and you try a quick glance round. There may be a question or two that calls for a simple yes or no in this preamble—mind you don't interrupt the chairman by trying to work something in. Keep it.

The chairman stops and then begins to put more searching questions. The most likely ones relate to the facts about yourself which you have already given on your application form. This always comes as a surprise. You think to yourself: it's there on my form, can't he read? But if you remember that the considerate chairman is aware of your nervousness, you will see that he is giving you an opportunity to speak about yourself on easy points which you know inside out. This helps you to get used to speaking and to prepare yourself for the harder questions to come. Moreover, the full details about yourself may have been omitted from the summary of your career which is in front of each member of the committee. So say those obvious things about yourself and expand them a little if you are not stopped by another question.

Arising from this the chairman leads on to questions which are aimed at getting you to talk and thus display your character, your manner, your speed of reaction, your views and at the same time reveal qualities fitting to the position to be filled. Fraser (3) describes the seven points which an interviewer is trying to discover: (a) evidence of your health and vitality; (b) your general and specialised education and your work experience; (c) your special aptitudes and readiness to acquire certain skills easily; (d) the *strength of your basic motivation*, i.e., the directions in which satisfactions are usually sought; (e) your basic emotional pattern, i.e., disposition, control and maturity; (f) your circumstances at present, i.e., your levels of expectation and conditions of life.

Therefore, in your eagerness to impress, do not speak too fast, do not go into too much detail unless later questions ask for it, and above all, do not wander, dragging in matters which are irrelevant to the question and the job to be done; (4) I have heard of people who, far from scoring points for displaying their knowledge, actually talked themselves out of the job. Keep it brief, speak moderately fast and loud enough to be heard by all, watch the chairman and note if he wants you to go on talking. Some people when thinking aloud must either fix their eyes on the floor or on a spot on the ceiling. No wonder they are thrown off

balance when the chairman interrupts the narrative that is just getting under way!

The testing question is "What would you do (about a matter within your powers) if appointed?" You have probably read and observed all you can about the new library and formed some opinions. When this question comes up it is not tactful or diplomatic to tell the committee how you would reorganise or revolutionise the service. Remember that you will be a servant of the committee. Questions on hobbies and general interests are likely. Sports are asked about quite frequently. Occasionally questions appear to probe your religion or politics—these may be sidetracked (if desired) as personal matters unlikely to affect your attitude as a librarian of broad outlook and wide interests.

After the chairman has put his questions he will turn to one or other of the members of the panel and ask if they have any questions to put. Here you will get a moment to look round. When answering, address the questioner to start with and then continue to address the chairman. Some of these questions will be the most difficult ones and you may find yourself starting on a discussion on some aspect of librarianship, say, classification, or printed catalogues, or work with children, on which you feel strongly. Take your cue from the chairman. Avoid using library jargon; remember that the panel is composed of a number of rose-growers, grandfathers, spinsters, business men, trade union leaders, educationists, fathers and mothers, and some non-readers, but not many of them know much of the intricacies of librarianship.

When all the members who wish to have put their questions, the chairman usually asks if you have any questions you would like to ask. Be prepared for this. Avoid asking about salary details, at least, as a first question. If the salary was advertised then it is assumed that you are willing to accept it, or the lowest point in a specified scale. If the advertisement mentioned the possibility of starting at a point on the scale according to qualifications and experience, then this is likely to be mentioned by the chairman or clerk. If it is not, or if you are asked to state the salary wanted, then you will put questions to clarify the exact amount.

Otherwise, have questions ready which relate to the library service, any plans for development referred to in the list of particulars supplied to you at the time of application, or any point relating to the post which you want made clear. Show interest in the library service and your willingness to understand what will be required of you.

The chairman indicates that the interview is over by thanking you and asking you to wait outside. Thank the chairman, bow slightly to the committee and leave. (5) In spite of the detail given above it is surprising how much can be packed into 15-20 minutes, which is the average time for interviews.

It is all over—nearly—and you can relax with your fellow victims and wait for the result. Some committees will send for the chosen person almost as soon as the last applicant has returned: others take a long time—half-an-hour or more—making up their minds (or tea). At last the clerk appears and asks Mr. B. or Miss C. to follow him. This is nearly always the selected person for the post, but occasionally candidates are recalled for a second interview or the first recalled person refuses the offer of the job. Only the appearance of the chairman to shake your hand, condole with you, joke with you, tell you how hard it was to decide, etc., finally dashes your hopes and you think of getting your expenses and away home.

Keep on trying! (6).

### References

1. HEPWORTH, P. Short List, in *L.A. Record*, Jan. 1952, p. 12-16 (L.S.A. 1572).
2. BISHOP, A. V. Short List—from the Committee's Viewpoint, in *L.A. Record*, Aug. 1952, p. 265-266 (L.S.A. 2057).
3. FRASER, J. M. A Handbook of Employment Interviewing. 1950.
4. COLE, JEAN and HARPER, TERESA. Date with a Committee, in *Assistant Librarian*, Aug. 1954, p. 131-132.
5. IVEY, W. L. How to Secure Promotion. 1933.
6. HYNES, WILFRID. Applications; Interview; Appointment, in *Library Assistant*, Nov. 1938, p. 257-267.

### A.A.L. CORRESPONDENCE COURSES

#### Revision Courses, March-June, 1956.

A limited number of *Registration* and *Final* courses will be available to run from March to June. These short period courses are reserved exclusively for those students who have already sat the examination in the subjects required.

The closing date for application is *20th February*, but forms for *Final* revision courses will be accepted up to one week after publication of the winter examinations results if this is later than *20th February*. After these dates no application will be considered.

#### Full Length Courses.

Applications for *First Professional Examination*, *Registration*, and *Final* courses beginning Spring, 1956, must be completed and returned by *28th February*. Full particulars of the courses offered are given in the current edition of the *Students' Handbook*. (L.A. 3s. 6d., post free).

#### Forms, Fees and Enquiries.

Forms may be obtained from the A.A.L. Hon. Education and Sales Officer, Mr. J. S. Davey, F.L.A., 49, Halstead Gardens, London, N.21, who will be pleased to answer any enquiries concerning the courses. Stamped addressed envelopes for replies would be appreciated. The fee for each course is £2 7s. 6d., plus 10s. extra to students in Africa, America, Asia and Australasia.

#### Note.

Many students in 1955 had their forms and fees returned because application was made after the closing

date. Will students please make their requests for forms and information to Mr. Davey as early as possible, in order to avoid disappointment.

#### Panel of Tutors.

Enquiries are invited from Fellows who are interested in becoming tutors. A reserve file of tutors in all subjects is being built up in order to meet the increasing demand for courses. Full details may be obtained from Mr. Davey at the above address.

### CITY OF LEEDS EDUCATION COMMITTEE

COLLEGE OF COMMERCE,  
43, WOODHOUSE LANE, LEEDS, 2.

---

*School of Librarianship*  
*Full-time Final Course.*

---

A full-time course for the *Final Examination* of the *Library Association* is provided by specialist staff of the College. Enquiries and applications for the 1956-57 session should be made now to the Principal.

GEORGE TAYLOR,  
*Chief Education Officer.*

# GO FORTH, MY LITTLE BOOK

EDWARD DUDLEY

LECTURER IN LIBRARIANSHIP, EALING TECHNICAL COLLEGE.

THE RECENT PUBLICATION of Helen Thornton Geer's *Charging Systems* (Chicago, American Library Association, \$3.75, 1955) is yet further proof of the importance attached by librarians to the speedy solution of one of the basic mechanical problems in public library administration.

It is necessary clearly to distinguish this interest from any innate desire to tinker for, although there must be somewhere an outlet for the latent Heath Robinson which is in most of us, the nature and size of the problem of evolving a satisfactory issue method are such that improvisation, however brilliant, is likely to create as many problems as it solves.

It seems proper, therefore, to investigate briefly the reasons for the recent interest and work in this field. *First*, the emphasis on the provision of personal service for the reader from qualified and experienced staff which is surely one of the really progressive trends in British postwar librarianship. We have thus seen in many libraries the emergence of reasonably satisfactory readers' advisory services, although in many others this exists only as form and façade hardly concealing the lack of adequate staff and bibliographical means to do the job. Such steps have been possible because librarians have come to see the counter as something necessary, but not of over-riding importance, and therefore not requiring the presence there of (relative.y) highly paid staff. *Second*, the converse problem presented by the necessity for professional staff to carry out routine counter duties in many smaller libraries and, at busy periods, in larger ones. *Third*, the realisation that the prospect of long hours of counter duty is a potent factor in the failure to recruit and retain junior staff. *Fourth*, that present issue systems involve great cost in staff labour-time, even if much of the work is done by junior librarians. *Fifth*, that the greater book issues of public libraries have as their concomitant greater inconvenience for the reader.

None of these factors is entirely new, and they are not here noted for the first time. Even before the war, there were indications that the Browne issue method was inefficient in busy libraries. And if, possibly with charity toward some, we assume that librarians have been sharply aware of the need for change, we should seek reasons for delay in the appearance of measures offering some possibility of advance. Great credit is, indeed, due to Wandsworth's librarian, Mr. E. V. Corbett, for his introduction of photographic charging to this country, but as Miss Geer points out at the beginning of her chapter on the subject—the longest in the book—Dr. Ralph Shaw installed a camera for microfilming issue records at Gary Public Library 15 years ago.

An issue method as part of the working mechanism of a busy library is not susceptible to controlled investigation and experiment in the same manner as, for example, the processes of overdue and book reservations. This fact, added to librarians' rather natural reluctance to undertake any exploratory work which might prejudice the running of their libraries, is one reason for delay. There is a tremendous weight of inertia to be overcome, or, to put it in other words, an issue method represents a large capital investment which many librarians do not want to scrap even when the rate of depreciation has reached intolerable limits. There are many who say that if they knew of a "better" method they would adopt it. Ignoring for the moment that few librarians attempt to define the requirements of a "better" system, these assumptions, if true,

point to two major deficiencies in our professional world. The first is the lack of an adequate information service which could garner and make available the results of work in progress in many aspects of librarianship. Here no criticism is intended of the library and information service at Chaucer House which can be no better than the money we spend on it and which in any case is unfortunately not regarded by most librarians as a centre to which they ought to report new work. The second deficiency is the absence of any organisation able to undertake investigation into practical and theoretical questions of library administration. Hence the many questionnaires sent out by librarians (and innumerable telephone calls) seeking information to present to library committees or when a change in routine is contemplated. The reports of O. & M. and other investigations into the administration of certain libraries are probably "classified" documents, but it is unfortunate that these rare "outside" investigations can provide no information for the profession at large and chief librarians and students in particular.

But not all British adherence to Browne can be explained by saying we know of no other method; effective barriers to change are erected. One such is the tinkering with Browne to make it work. No doubt a few rationalisations are possible, but in the main such reforms are insignificant and leave the central problems unsolved. A further reason preventing widespread advance—and in spite of the emergence of photocharging and token methods, it must be remembered that both are rare exceptions to the many Browne variants—is that many librarians make either unnecessary or impossible demands of an issue method and refuse to consider change until these are embodied in some practical scheme. It is not simply a case of wanting the best of two worlds, but of desiring from an issue method advantages which can only be offered by a combination of six methods—without their attendant disadvantages. A search for such an impossible ideal thus obscures the fact that, in order to secure any advantage from a change in issue method, compromise is necessary. (One wonders what were offered—and expected by the Examiner—as concepts of an "ideal" method in candidates' answers to a question on the subject in the December Registration Examination, Group C.). We thus find that many criticisms of photocharging and token methods are based upon the difficulties, real or apparent, they create in the reservation, overdue or stocktaking procedures.

Surely it becomes clear that an issue method succeeds or fails by the measure of efficiency it achieves in the carrying out of its basic task—the recording of the issue and return of books. As long as librarians require "Browne" type reservation and overdue procedures, "detailed" (read Dewey main class) issue "statistics" (i.e., figures in an issues book) and curbs on those prodigious readers who would "take out too many books" without the restraint imposed by "one ticket, one book," little advance seems possible, queues of readers and harassed staffs remaining as symptoms of professional maladies. The insistence on the retention of Browne until a system is evolved that will do all that Browne does, but better, whilst curing the many ills it is heir to, should collapse under the weight of its own contradictions. Only the Browne method can do what Browne does. This is not to say that any new method will not bring problems in its train—such as the re-registration of readers and the accounting for tokens at Westminster City Libraries—but if basic problems are solved, difficulties in the solution of minor problems should be reckoned as a fair price to pay.

Perhaps Miss Geer's book will aid those librarians who are contemplating a change in issue method—may even cause the change to follow

the contemplation. In view of the great interest shown in Mr. Corbett's adoption of photocharging—interest to the point of emulation in some London libraries—it is probably timely to ask that manufacturers consider the design of a less forbidding machine, for as Miss Geer says of the *Recordak*, the "size of the machine presents a public relations problem as it causes a physical barrier between the assistant and the library patron." (p. 52). A little can be done to obviate this by careful planning of the issue desk.

A further use of Miss Geer's comparative study of 17 issue methods is that it may convince many that the Dickman, Newark and Detroit methods constitute little if any advance on Browne. Although it is not her intention to come to any conclusions, Miss Geer may also convince many librarians of the dangers of attempting to provide the advantages of two systems by producing a hybrid of both of them, e.g., token and photocharging to limit the number of books issued to one reader. Hybridisation is one of the more virulent forms of Heath Robinsonism.

NOTES.—No attempt has been made to indicate systematically the contents of Miss Geer's book. For this, readers should refer to Mr. Whitman's review in the *Library Association Record*, January, 1956.

Mr. Corbett was written of his work with the *Recordak* in the *Record*, September, 1955, p. 345—348. Mr. W. R. Maidment deals with the general problems of issue methods in the *Record*, February, 1955, p. 53-56.

Reference here to "Browne" and not "Brown" (see *Record*, April, 1955, p. 162; June, 1955, p. 234-5) is in accordance with Miss Geer's reference (p. 2) to Nina E. Browne.

# BENLOCK LTD.

*Library Bookbinders & Booksellers*

## BINDING

SOUND WORKMANSHIP  
AT COMPETITIVE PRICES

*All Enquiries welcomed at*

BENLOCK LTD., NELSON ST., SOUTH BANK

MIDDLESBROUGH

Telephone : South Bank 58259

YORKS.

s  
e  
r  
e  
n  
y  
g  
  
s  
t  
t  
e  
s  
d  
-  
  
-  
-  
  
e  
h  
5,  
  
l,  
s